Mahakali Treaty

394. SHRI CHITTA BASU : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Mahakali Treaty has since been ratified by Nepal's Parliament;

(b) if so, whether it has opened up new opportunities for further strengthening of relations between the two countries, especially in water resources cooperation;

(c) whether the Prime Minister held any talks with the Prime Minister of Nepal during his recent visit to Rome; and

(d) if so, the issues that were discussed and the outcome thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) to (c) Yes, Sir.

(d) During the discussions, a wide range of subjects were covered, and the friendly, cordial nature of bilateral relations between India and Nepal was reiterated. The discussions emphasised the need for intensifying bilateral economic cooperation and the need for diversifying trade relations. Reference was also made to the successful conclusion, and subsequent ratification, of the Mahakali Treaty which has opened up many new opportunities for cooperation. A specific emphasis was also laid on the need for exploiting the immense economic potential of the South Asian region for the benefit of the people of the region. The Prime Minister of Nepal, during the meeting, extended an invitation to the Indian Prime Minister to visit Nepal, which was gladly accepted.

[Translation]

Subsidy for Lift Irrigation

395. SHRIMATI SHEELA GAUTAM : Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have made any changes in the scheme pertaining to the subsidy given to farmers for lift irrigation;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the total area to be covered under lift irrigation; and

(d) the State-wise break-up of the funds allocated for the year 1996-97 for lift irrigation ?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA) : (a) Union Government is not operating any scheme under which subsidy for lift irrigation is given to farmers.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

[English]

New Policies on Highways and Shipping

396. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government have announced the new policy on highways and shipping recently;

(b) if so, the salient features thereof;

(c) whether the Government have also taken any important policy decision in regard to major and minor ports;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor and the time by which new policies on highways and shipping are likely to be announced?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a), (b) and (e) Government has announced new policy on National Highways (NH), the salient features of which are as under :—

(i) Simplification of land acquisition and environmental clearance procedure.

(ii) Collection of toll in perpetuity on improved four lane sections of National Highways to be used for further development of National Highways.

(iii) Guidelines finalised for taking up NH projects on Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) basis providing inter-alia for award of work through competitive bidding on least cost to user.

(iv) The Government enabled to make capital Investment in National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) for leveraging the same to raise further resources from market.

However, new policy on Shipping is under consideration.

(c) and (d) Government have issued policy guidelines on private sector participation in the Port Sector. The salient features of the same are given in the statement enclosed. As far as minor ports are concerned, the responsibility for the development of same rests with the respective Maritime State Government.

Statement

(i) The existing legislative framework permits private sector participation in ports.

(ii) Ports will continue to discharge their regulatory role under Major Port Trusts Act, 1963.

(iii) In identified projects to be put out on tender on BOT basis, the feasibility report will be made at the expense of the port, the cost of which will be subsequently recovered from the successful tenderer.